

**10/563394**

**IAP20 Rec'd PCT/PTO 05 JAN 2006**

REMARKS:

This Amendment is submitted simultaneously with filing of the above identified application.

With the present Amendment applicant has amended the claims so as to eliminate their multiple dependency.

Consideration and allowance of the present application is most respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Claims

- (Original)
1. Screw connection element having an outer threaded portion (6) and a sealing means (9, 19) which is disposed in the threads (8) thereof, characterised in that it is provided with a protective covering (10, 18) which surrounds the outer threaded portion (6), is produced from a flexible material and is intended for retaining the sealing means (9, 19) in the threads (8).

(Original)

  2. Screw connection element according to claim 1, characterised in that the protective covering (10) is applied on the outer threaded portion (6) by an immersion or spraying process.

(Original)

  3. Screw connection element according to claim 1, characterised in that the protective covering (10) comprises a sheath which is produced by deep-drawing and screwed onto the outer threaded portion (6).

(currently amended)

  4. Screw connection element according to claim 2 ~~or 3~~, characterised in that the protective covering (10) is provided on its rear side with a mounting flange (10a, 22c).

(Original)

  5. Screw connection element according to claim 4, characterised in that the mounting flange (10a, 22c) abuts on a shoulder (11) which is provided on the rear end of the outer threaded portion (6) and can be connected to said shoulder.

(Original)

  6. Screw connection element according to claim 5, characterised in that the mounting flange (10a, 22c) can be bonded to the shoulder (11) by gluing.

*(currently amended)*

claim 3

7. Screw connection element according to ~~one of the claims 3 to 6~~, characterised in that a thread (8a) situated at the front end of the outer threaded portion (6) is free of sealing means (9) and the protective covering (10) is connected in a form-fitting manner to this thread (8a) in the axial direction of the outer threaded portion (6).

*(original)*

8. Screw connection element according to claim 7, characterised in that the form-fitting connection is produced by shrinkage or compression.

*(currently amended)*

claim 1

9. Screw connection element according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 8~~, characterised in that the sealing means (9) abuts directly on the threads (8) of the outer threaded portion (6) and the protective covering (10) has an inner diameter which corresponds essentially to the outer diameter of the outer threaded portion (6).

*(currently amended)*

claim 1

10. Screw connection element according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 9~~, characterised in that the protective covering (18) contains an inner part (20) with an inner wall (22) which is adapted to the outer threaded portion (6) and an outer part (21) which surrounds the inner part, the sealing means (19) being disposed between the inner and the outer part (20 to 21).

*(original)*

11. Screw connection element according to claim 10, characterised in that the inner and the outer part (20, 21) can be connected to each other securely.

*(currently amended)*

12. Screw connection element according to claim 10 ~~or 11~~, characterised in that the inner and the outer part (20, 21) can be connected to each other in a form-fit at their front ends in the axial direction.

*(currently amended)*

13. Screw connection element according to claim 11 ~~or 12~~, characterised in that the inner part and the outer part (20, 21) are provided at their rear ends with mounting flanges (21a, 22c) which are intended for mutual connection.

*(currently amended)*

14. Screw connection element according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 13~~, claim 1, characterised in that the sealing means (9, 19) is formed from a long fibrous or a thread-shaped material.

*(Original)*

15. Protective covering for a screw connection element (1, 25) which is provided with an outer threaded portion (6) which is intended for receiving a sealing means (9, 19), comprising a sheath which is intended for screwing onto the outer threaded portion (6).

*(Original)*

16. Protective covering according to claim 15, characterised in that it has an inner diameter which corresponds essentially to the outer diameter of the outer threaded portion (6).

*(currently amended)*

17. Protective covering according to claim 15 ~~or 16~~, characterised in that it contains an inner part (20) with an inner wall (22) which is adapted to the outer threaded portion (6) and an outer part (21) which surrounds the inner part (20) and is provided with a sealing means (19) between the inner and outer part (20, 21).

*(Original)*

18. Protective covering according to claim 17, characterised in that the inner and the outer part (20, 21) can be connected to each other securely.

*(currently amended)*

19. Protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 15 to 18~~, claim 15, characterised in that the inner and the outer part (20, 21) are connected to each other in a form-fit at their front ends in the axial direction.

- (currently amended) claim 15
20. Protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 15 to 19,~~ characterised in that the inner part and the outer part (20, 21) are provided at their rear ends with mounting flanges (21a, 22c) which are intended for mutual connection.
- (currently amended) claim 15
21. Protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 15 to 20,~~ characterised in that the sealing means (9, 19) is formed from a long fibrous or a thread-shaped material.
- (currently amended) claim 1
22. Screw connection element or protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 21,~~ characterised in that the sealing means (9, 19) comprises hemp fibres.
- (original)
23. Screw connection element or protective covering according to claim 22, characterised in that the inner and/or the outer part (20, 21) is formed from a composite material.
- (currently amended) claims 15
24. Screw connection element or protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 15 to 23,~~ characterised in that the inner and/or the outer part (20, 21) contains protein-containing fibres.
- (currently amended) claim 15
25. Screw connection element or protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 15 to 23,~~ characterised in that the inner and/or the outer part (20, 21) contains cellulose.
- (currently amended) claim 15
26. Screw connection element or protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 15 to 26,~~ characterised in that the inner and/or the outer part (20, 21) contains mineral components.
- (currently amended) claims 15
27. Screw connection element or protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 15 to 22,~~ characterised in that the inner and/or the outer part (20, 21) contains respectively at least one polymer.

- (currently amended)*
28. Screw connection element or protective covering according to ~~one of the claims 1 to 27~~ <sup>claim 1</sup>, characterised in that the sealing means (9, 19) is enriched with a material which restricts the growth of germs and/or bacteria and/or destroys these.

- (original)*
29. Screw connection element or protective covering according to claim 28, characterised in that the material is present in wire or powder form.

- (currently amended)*
30. Screw connection element or protective covering according to claim 28 ~~or 29~~, characterised in that the material comprises a heavy metal.

- (original)*
31. Screw connection element or protective covering according to claim 30, characterised in that the material is copper.